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# Good Citizenship The First Aim And Object of Education

An Address Delivered at the

Commencement Exercises of All Saint's College

Vicksburg, Mississippi, June 2, 1920

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## GOOD CITIZENSHIP THE FIRST AIM AND OBJECT OF EDUCATION.

An Address Delivered at the Comencement Exercises of All  
Saint's College, Vicksburg, Miss., June 2, 1920.

*Ladies and Gentlemen:—*

When one is called on to speak to an audience like this, composed of young students at the close of a scholastic year, two sensations are experienced by the speaker. The first is that of pleasure at being given the opportunity of congratulating both instructors and pupils on the successful termination of the labors of the year, and to this we should prefer yielding, but the feeling of responsibility which is always felt in addressing young students with impressionable minds outweighs the former and must take first place today. This feeling of responsibility is intensified by the thought that words may be spoken here today that might influence some young life to high and worthy effort, or to the contrary something may be inadvertently said that may quench the fires of a laudable ambition and discourage some brave endeavor in after days. My subject is favorable to the former, and I trust that out of the thoughts that I present may be borne to you a message of wholesome optimism and encouragement that will induce you to strive for those things that go to make true womanhood and stimulate you to renewed efforts in the pursuit of knowledge.

I am not among those who hold that there is a difference in the intellectual capacity of man and woman, neither do I think that all governmental talent is confined to the male sex. An address prepared as suitable pabulum for the young man is equally suitable for the young woman. If I make no difference between them in the treatment of the subject which I have selected for your consideration I hope you will not shrink from the responsibility, and I do not believe that you will, since the new forces of civilization have expected much, and will continue to expect much, of you. I know of no more fatal blunder in a

speaker in addressing young ladies than to confine himself to the sentimental alone. Life's rhapsodies—the music of babbling brooks, mystic moonlight, and the divination of the starry spheres, however beautiful, belong only in their rightful place, and may heaven grant that you may never be without their influence on your lives, but the young woman of today is confronted with the stern lesson of citizenship and the task of helping to reconstruct an almost shattered world, and her feet must be prepared for new paths, and her mind exercised along new lines of thought.

When England, the mother of the Anglo-Saxon race, conferred on woman the rights and duties of suffrage as a just recognition of her service in war, when civilization was at stake, and man was about to return to a savage state, she, though tardily acknowledging the truth, established a precedent in government which in time will have universal application in all civilized countries. The subject then which I shall discuss with you today is good citizenship as the first aim and object of education. I believe that it is one about which many of us are thinking at the present time, since on this ideal depends the continuance of our civilization, and through it must come the uplift of man. This thought which stresses the importance of the individual in the higher development of society and dignifies his efforts in the great task of shaping a more perfect civilization—always the dream of a few souls, has been animating the mind of the sage, philosopher and poet for all past ages; yet more, has been taking practical form and shape in the world's legislation and affairs for the last half century. Not only do our laws and sermons reflect this advance in man's thought, but the fugitive verse and essay, coming alike from crowded mart and village seclusion and cast into the monster jaws of the printing press to find a place in some out-of-the-way corner of the great metropolitan daily, give evidence that many souls have caught this radiant vision and are bearing its message to their fellows of every race and clime. And the burden of this message is that all men and women individually as well as collectively are to take part in the future higher order of civilization upon which the world expectantly waits, and for which its strongest and most enlightened

racess have suffered most to secure and preserve.

So I bring to you a world-wide aspiration which has touched the heart and thrilled the mind of all people and races in proportion to their vision and uplift. It is a far cry from slavery and serfdom, when men in the aggregate were the tools and instruments to further the projects of a few individuals, and this new creed that makes each life individually responsible in the efforts of society to secure the welfare of the human race, that teaches that all law and government are designed for the protection, development and happiness of the individual, and proves that it is upon the shoulders of the rank and file of its population, trained in all the functions of good citizenship, that a government must rest if it is to endure. That this is the aim and object of education is the thought with which I wish to impress you today.

We sometimes show a tendency in our educational ideals and methods to forget the real object to be attained in the mental and moral training of the young, and to overlook the true purpose of education. But out of many systems and modes the truth is gradually forcing itself upon us that the aim of all education for a man or for a woman is to make him or her a good citizen; whatever else is added in the way of scholarship in the education of youth, the first requisite is that they should be trained in all the requirements of good citizenship. Please bear in mind that I use the word citizenship in the broadest possible sense, that of man's and woman's service to their kind.

It is the history of human progress and civilization that the advancement of man has been secured by a slow and gradual process of improvement. From a state of savagery, in which the power of brute force was terribly triumphant, we have, through many centuries, evolved a system of life and government founded upon law, order and justice, and have reached that high plane where we realize the importance of providing for the mental and moral uplift of the people as a whole. In this painful progress towards better conditions the methods employed in the training of youth have undergone and are still undergoing radical changes for the better. Though it is not necessary for the

purpose of this discussion to make a survey of the educational systems of the past, it should be said in passing that before the idea of popular government took firm hold upon the minds of men, and aroused them to the full appreciation of the necessity of universal education as the surest means of maintaining good government, the avenues to knowledge were closed to the masses and open only to the few.

Under the operation of an educational system that provided for the few only, serfdom, not citizenship, was the general condition of man, and ignorance, superstition, tyranny and imposture were characteristic of the times. The overthrow of such conditions was brought about after centuries of conflict between the classes and the people. When the idea, which had struggled for recognition in more than one of the great civilizations of the past, that government should rest upon the consent of the governed triumphed in America, the greatest step in the history of mankind was taken in the direction of good citizenship; and it may well be called the American idea in practical and uniform adaption to government. It has for its foundation stone the principle that in a state where the people are self-governing, the public welfare depends upon the intelligence, integrity and virtue of its citizens. If the individual has not had that training which fits him for his duties, if he is incapable of performing the high office assigned him as a source of political power, his country suffers proportionately. The surest foundation of a wise and beneficent government in a Democracy is an intelligent and moral citizenship; and in recognition of this truth, the founders of our Republic, under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson, taught the very great importance of developing the mental and moral life of those upon whom rested the welfare and safety of the country. The founders of this Republic believe that it could never be safe but in the hands of the people themselves; and the provision they made for the education and advancement of the people is evidence that they believed that it would not be safe even in their hands if they were not trained in head and heart to meet their responsibilities.

In the study of questions like this, you will find the best interpretation in the writings of Thomas Jefferson; and it would be well for every man and woman who hopes to perpetuate democratic ideals to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the thought and doctrine of this great political philosopher and constructive statesman. To him more than to any one man are we indebted for the principles that have controlled and directed our government and shaped our educational policy. In a recent publication entitled “Master Thoughts of Thomas Jefferson,” many of which seem to be the Utopian dreams of Sir Thomas More adapted and made ready for use of man, we find this very interesting formula and method laid down for the primary or fundamental education of men, and it applies equally to women:

“1. To give every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his business.

2. To enable him to calculate for himself and to express and preserve his ideals, his contracts and accounts in writing.

3. To improve by reading his morals and faculties.

4. To understand his duties to his neighbor and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either.

5. To know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains; to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates, and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor and judgment.

6. And in general to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he may be placed.”

Mr. Jefferson further held that as an educated citizenship was the most important element in national life, it was the duty of the State to offer to rich and poor alike an educational opportunity without which a high type of citizenship could not be attained. That the education of youth is an obligation of the State is not denied in any quarter today, but in the application

of that great ideal there are dangers to be avoided as well as objects to be attained. To direct the educational forces of the State into channels so as to best subserve the purposes for which they were set in motion, should be the study of every thoughtful educator, and every public official who influences this branch of our government.

If the training of men and women goes no deeper than the cultivation of the mind; if it occupies itself with the development of the memory alone, and seeks to convert the brain into a storehouse of information, it fails to develop that mental and spiritual power in men and women which is so much needed in the advancement of the world today. If an educational system develops nothing more than pedantry, if it creates nothing better than pride of opinion, if it fosters nothing higher than love of self and the desire for self-aggrandizement, it has established a false standard of life, and fails to accomplish the high purpose for which it was instituted. If on the other hand the high development of intellectual power and insight arouses the spiritual forces of the individual, which in turn by the influence of example tend to promote the general welfare, then can it truly be said to be fulfilling its highest mission.

Education in its truest sense means the training of the body, mind and spirit for the duties of good citizenship, and in that term I include all the basic relations of man in the construction of the social organism. This thought, though it has not received the attention it should, has a permanent lodgment in our institutions, and to it we owe many of our national characteristics. It has left its impress upon the lives of our great leaders of thought and action, and has given to the world the American type of man, which, in spite of all that may be truthfully said against it, is one that leads in the soundest and best civilizations of today. And if there are two principles of government held in higher esteem than all others by our Republic they are that no nation can live in ignorance with impunity, and no country can become great that fails to educate the people for the responsibilities of citizenship. To fit the individual to take part in

the functions of government is the American ideal of the truest use of education.

The question is, are we enforcing that ideal? Or does it represent to us nothing more than a legacy to which we refer and make much of on state occasions, but whose very existence is forgotten in the formula of the schools.

I do not wish to be understood as holding the theory that this preparation for citizenship is something which is controlled and directed entirely by the schools. To narrow education down to what is imparted by the schools alone, is to confine it to narrow limits indeed. Education of course depends upon the study of books and much may be gained from them, but the system which depends entirely upon the knowledge gained from this source is insufficient, unless that knowledge has come to the individual in such a shape as to make him an active force in the world's best work.

In justice to the schools, we should not forget that the training of the citizens begins first in the home. If it is neglected there, if the young and plastic mind is not imbued with worthy aspirations, and entertains no conception of right and wrong before it is placed under the control of the teacher, the chances are that the training of the school, however well directed, will result in failure. Nor can book culture, as necessary and helpful as it is in elevating the people, develop the finer perceptions in determining right and wrong. This is gained in human contact and association and from the examples of those about us; for without these aids the ideals gained from books are apt to become mere abstractions and fail in their application to daily life. It is then in the character of the teacher, the purity of the home, the example of those in authority about him, as well as in books, that the individual finds the necessary sources in the preparation for good citizenship. That educational system therefore which attaches all importance to the standard of scholarship, and none to the character of the teacher, may turn out a crop of brilliant intellects but unreliable citizens. And in our

country scholarship is not nearly so desirable as reliable citizenship.

Our population is unlike that of any other of the great countries of the world. The opportunities of a new and undeveloped land, with its inviting prospect of equal opportunity—that guarantee of protection to men's highest aspiration and efforts—have brought to our shores a most cosmopolitan population. Nothing like it has ever existed before; no other country has such a heterogeneous mass of humanity forming its population, and no other country has such a task before it, in the education and assimilation of such diverse elements. With the great majority of those coming to us the duties of citizenship are unknown; they come from countries that suppress with an iron hand every movement for the uplift of the masses, and are products of systems of government which have never recognized the political, social nor religious rights of the individual. Either hard, soulless ecclesiasticism has dwarfed their true spiritual powers, or the influence of feudalism has starved their social aspirations or the tyranny of political institutions has for generations bent their backs with heavy burdens. These people are transplanted from such environments to a democracy governed by the people, and in a short time are clothed with all the rights of citizenship. It is not difficult to see the terrible effects on our civilization of this transplanted population, if it is allowed to remain uninfluenced by the highest ideals of our institutions. Ignorance is the greatest menace to a country governed by the people. There is no place in our system for the helot nor the serf. If the people who are coming to us now fail in their generation to become good citizens, they are a constant menace to our civilization. If their children fail they will effect its ruin, for no nation can withstand disintegration from within. And whatever else is included in our intellectual aspiration, the great task of education in America is the development of universal good citizenship. Nor have we thus far been a failure in our efforts to achieve this greatest of all governmental aspirations. It is the unusual advantages offered in our political, social and educa-

tional systems, combined with the influence of millions of self-respecting, aspiring freemen that have enabled this nation to assimilate the foreign-born population that has, during the past years, been dumped upon our shores. Yet though our institutions are ideal and have in the main stood the most exacting tests, conditions with us are far from what we should and must have to secure our final triumph.

If, as one historian has asserted, under unfavorable conditions we, in this country, finally grow to be tolerable men and women is there not work and enough for us to do in bettering those conditions in order that we may not turn out merely "tolerable men and women," but such men and women as will be a helpful influence in shaping and directing a civilization straining under conditions wholly different from those of the past? One, too, whose need and demand for right methods have never been so insistent as they are today.

If we then have awakened to a knowledge of the supreme importance of the development of the individual in the present-day civilization, and especially among self-governing peoples, it is not strange that we are interested in the methods and influences that improve men and lift them up to a higher scale of life. And the citizen, what of him? If an American, at the outset, he is the beneficiary of the almost divine governmental theory—equal opportunity and equal protection for all men. And view it as we may, the success of the principles of free home, free government and free church depend upon the wisdom and restraint he exercises as the recipient of such rich blessings. The obligation which he has assumed is no light one. Obedience to the very law which proceeds from him as a source of political power is one of the strongest indications of his right and ability to participate in the affairs of government; and one of the surest proofs of his good citizenship is his reverence for this first postulate of good government.

The surest evidence of the spread of enlightenment and civilization among a people is respect for law. On the other hand, the surest evidence of the existence of ignorance and barbarism

in a state or nation is the prevalence of a feeling of contempt for the laws by which they are governed.

It is a custom in France to carve over the portals of the buildings dedicated to the service of the nation, the words, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," as a means of impressing national ideals upon the people. I believe that if the ideals that have developed and are shaping the civilization of the best races of the earth were held before the eyes of the world, not one would explain their civilization or voice its future hope more clearly than the one contained in the words, in the triumph of law is liberty.

If therefore reverence for law is to remain a national characteristic in this country, it must be made a part of the people's lives. It should be taught in every home, and impressed by precept and example in every school, college and university in the land; it should find expression in the daily life of the citizen and be enthroned in every church, in every court and every legislative hall of the nation.

In those civilizations where reverence for law is felt by the people, the ultimate destiny of man is safeguarded, let them be rich or poor, high or low, white or black; and in no conduct is reverence for law more evident than in the manner in which citizens of the country take part in public matters. If they take no interest in public affairs, and allow others to bear the burdens of government, they are in a sense a party to its failure if failure there be; and the condition of public affairs depends largely upon the manner in which the citizen fulfills his public obligations.

One of the dangers that threaten us in our own State, and statistics show that like conditions prevail elsewhere, is the growing indisposition of men to meet the requirements of law in the exercise of the right to vote. It was stated in a Mississippi paper a few years since that there were 30,000 white men in the State who had disfranchised themselves by failing to pay a poll tax of \$2.00 annually. Such indifference to public privilege and duty is a dangerous symptom. But there is even a graver side

to the question, for it often occurs that after disregarding and violating the law by failing to meet its requirements, delinquent voters are allowed to participate in the affairs of government. Such contempt for law will soon bring our political institutions into reproach, good government will be impossible and corruption will be the prevailing condition.

Again the evidence of good citizenship is shown in the attitude that the voter takes upon public questions arising for solution. There is a moral side to every social, political and economic problem, and it is easy to discern the individual's standards of integrity by the men he prefers and the measures he espouses.

The surest evidence of faithfulness to the obligation of citizenship is that devotion to the public good which makes self-interest give way when it conflicts with the welfare of the public. Self-interest seeks in numberless ways to secure special favors from legislation with little regard for the general good.

The disposition to take from the pockets of the poor a part of their daily earnings through connivance and unfair business methods, a system known as profiteering in life's necessities, is one of the worst forms of bad citizenship in this country, for, as Ruskin says in more polished phrase but employing the same idea, the system that robs a man of his health, happiness and prosperity is as murderous in its effects as the bullet that summarily puts an end to his life. Further, the injury inflicted is perhaps more deleterious to society, though in the former case it is, in a sense, not intended, while in the latter it is premeditated. It is the love of self, and the desire for self-aggrandizement that faces us with such a bold, hard front today. It has invaded our most sacred realms; the Church sometimes sees her spiritual power perish in its withering grasp, society has been the victim of its deadening touch, and every branch of our government has felt its blighting influence.

One of the greatest battles to be fought in this country by the people lies around the combination between business and leg-

isolation, a combination which entrenches and protects numberless evils in our complex commercial system, and which upsets entirely the democratic ideal of equal opportunity for all and special privileges to none. It might be asked how are we to accomplish its destruction. Surely not by lawless outbursts that prove our total unfitness to take part in the task. You cannot put down law breaking with law breaking; you cannot overcome evil with evil. To overcome injustice and wrong, you must wield the mightier power of Justice. And it is for a struggle between these contending forces in the maintenance of our institutions and civilization, that we need in this country a moral, well-trained and educated citizenship. The power of your disapproval lies in your own standards of right, and your ability to correct evil lies in the weight of your influence for good. The public opinion that condemns wrong must emanate from a trusted source, or else it is powerless to accomplish any good result. If the great body of people are to maintain a place and influence in the perpetuation of our institutions, they must in themselves represent the best ideals that characterize those institutions; for it is only by a stern application of like high truths to their own lives, that they can demand and maintain a correct standard of public service. Now this is the common task and common duty of the citizen, and his education should look mainly to his preparation for this work and it is one that concerns us deeply as a people and as a nation.

Montesquieu, the great French political philosopher, in his "Spirit of Laws," says: "If a Republic be small, it is destroyed by a foreign force; if it be large, it is ruined by an internal imperfection." The American people should ponder these words carefully. We believe that we have established the best plan of government in existence, but, though we have faith in the principles that make our institutions, we have no assurance of their perpetuity, and it will require no light effort upon our part to prevent a failure. If we fail, it will be through some universal imperfection in ourselves; and if we triumph, our success will lie in the high moral and intellectual power of the people as a whole.

Finally, we are social beings, and like most of the animal

species we love to go in droves and herds. Our evolved form of civilization makes us more dependent upon each other than are the other creatures. A pair of birds can doubtless soar and sing, and build and multiply as happily and successfully alone as when surrounded by hundreds of their kind, but man for his perfect development needs the home, the church, the State, and all the contrivances of civilization. If he meets in an acceptable manner, the requirements of these institutions in a given area, he will soon find himself in unison with the great movement for the uplift of men of every race and clime.

But for all this dark hour the light is breaking. In much of our legislation we are safeguarding humanity. It took society a long time to realize that it was the duty of the State to care for the broken and stranded wrecks of humanity, marring its perfection, and the result largely of its own misdoing. The realization of that obligation has not only developed a spirit to relieve misfortune, but a desire and an organized effort for its prevention.

In a civilization influenced by these ideals man soon becomes imbued with the spirit of universal helpfulness, a characteristic that differentiates the present advanced civilizations from those of the past. Nor do the waiting and eager peoples of the lower and weaker races let him remain in ignorance of their need. Modern science and invention have swept away the isolation of communities, states and nations. Nations no longer live unto themselves, but are knit together in bonds of common interests and common purposes, and are animated by the spirit of universal brotherhood as never before. Though the last assertion may sound unduly optimistic at this time when man seems to be man's worst enemy, there is substantial proof of it. Let an earthquake destroy a foreign city and the ships of every nation bear food and clothing to the stricken people. Let the news of any great calamity be flashed across the deep sea cables that bind the nations together, and an expression of the world's sympathy immediately follows. If the safety and peace of any land or people are endangered through the conflicting interests of rival powers, every effort is made by allied nations to adjust the dif-

ferences in an equitable manner, and if this cannot be attained such nations are willing and have proved themselves willing to spend their blood to the last drop to uphold justice among men.

The law of social evolution then, notwithstanding the apparent breakdown in our civilization, is in active operation, and as our vision enlarges we shall all, like our immortal Wilson whose rare spirit recognizes no confines nor limits in his interest in mankind, become citizens of the world.

And now, young ladies, I would not have you think from what has gone before that I am unmindful of your woman's nature and God given responsibilities. It would be a false theory that would teach you that woman and man in their nature are wholly alike. They are not more different in their frame and semblance than in their nature. Their intuitions, methods of reasoning and physical powers are not the same, nor have been since the cave man, with club in hand, slew the beasts of the forests and gave the flesh to the woman and her children. There is the man nature and the woman nature, but while each manifests itself in its own way one is as capable as the other, and as necessary in helping the human race onward and upward and equal rights in the performance of the task should be the status for both. While no training of any kind nor joint effort will ever make their natures the same the best results are obtained by a combination of their forces. The woman will always be largely occupied with the mental and moral needs of humanity and will largely be interested in the human side of life. She leaves the feeding and clothing of the race to man, but its happiness, freedom from pain, and mental and spiritual welfare have always claimed her thought and will always be her task. In this field lies her chief claim to equal rights and privileges in government.

That woman will exercise a purifying influence in legislation and government none of us can for a moment doubt, but no matter how intellectual she may become, and what efficiency she may develop in her varied activities she must always remain the mother of the race, the nourisher, guardian and friend of little children, the comforter and joy of her mate, and keeper of his home, the loving sister of mankind, and the good citizen that she has ever been.





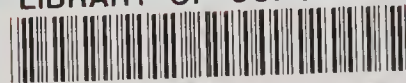


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